

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Conceit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER II. "EMBARRAS DE RICHESSES."

SIR ROY KENYON advanced eagerly to meet the two young people. He was a tall, finely-made man of some fifty years, with a face expressive of good-nature and indolence—the face of a man who had taken life easily all his days, and had a general dislike to "worry." Yet like many good-natured lazy people, he could be firm almost to obstinacy when he chose, and there was a look of determination about the lips that contradicted somewhat the genial smile and the kindly eyes.

"Welcome back, Neale, my boy!" he said, shaking hands heartily with the young fellow. "This is a surprise. Why did you not write?"

"I thought I'd be here as soon as a letter, uncle, and you know I detest pen and ink."

"A family failing," said the elder man. "Well, no matter, so long as you are here. And so Dr. Grünbaum was as good as his word, and your sight is all right again. Bravo! Let me look at you. Yes—I declare your eyes look as well as ever they did. What do you think, Alexis?"

"I have not looked at them yet," she said tranquilly. "Neale says he can see, and he ought to know best."

"She has been pitching into me as usual," said Neale, deprecatingly. "Making me feel a fool before we exchanged twenty words."

"Oh, that is only her way," laughed her father. "We all get served alike."

"You have only just come here, I suppose?"

"Yes—we arrived on Saturday. Where is your baggage, by the way?"

"Bari is bringing it. He ought to be here soon. I walked up from the lodge."

"And how did you like Bari? Was he all his character stated?"

"Oh, he is a capital fellow," said Neale, cheerfully. "Talks all the languages—saves one no end of bother, and is not above putting his hand to anything."

"A treasure indeed," remarked Alexis. She had plucked a tea-rose from one of the pots which had been brought from the forcing-houses, and was ruffling its delicate, perfumed petals in a listless fashion, as though the conversation did not interest her. "But, as a rule, confidential servants are a mistake. They impose on you, and get hold of your secrets—if you have any—and expect a premium for devotion all the time."

"Alexis is generally dissatisfied with everything and everyone," said her father with an indulgent smile. "That comes of being a spoilt child."

The girl tossed aside her rose carelessly, and, with one of her rare impulses of tenderness, put her hand on her father's arm.

"You are to blame," she said. "You should have denied me indulgence now and then. But it is only a case of the crumpled rose-leaf—nothing more serious."

"Have you ever found your rose-leaf?" asked her cousin.

"Occasionally; or I think I have, which answers the same purpose. But confess I am right in being hard to please. Life is so made up of shams and affectations that no one dares to be honest or truthful. We are all more or less bound by the way we live, and yet the world compels us to pretend we're not. Society is tiresome; it is

silly; it is profoundly selfish; and yet we are bound to it in a way, and can't break our self-wrought chains, or won't, because it needs courage. If we love freedom and air, and the greenwood, and the mountains, we sacrifice them for the sake of social distinction, or worldly success, or ignoble ambitions. We abuse the world, and yet we can't turn our backs on it and do without it."

"You might," said her cousin, "if you wished. But I don't believe you do wish. You like your court about you, say what you may; and you wouldn't care for a long run of solitude—unless," he added meaningly, "it was a 'solitude à deux;' and that wouldn't last a month with one so fickle."

"It will never last at all with me," she said scornfully. "How often am I to tell you that sentiment and I are utterly at variance?"

"You always did jest about what is serious and earnest to most women's lives," began Sir Roy.

"I am not jesting at all," she interrupted. "I speak exactly as I think. Why should I not? I have seen enough of men, and human nature in all its aspects, to be able to form some opinion of them."

"That," said her cousin, "is, as I said before, your misfortune. You dissect and analyse so unmercifully that enjoyment or appreciation become impossible. You were created with a capacity for both, but you have done your best to destroy them, not caring how much you lose thereby."

"That is the case, I fear," said Sir Roy, looking somewhat regretfully at the delicate, clear-cut face, with its lovely, scornful mouth. "If she could feel more human interest, and less contempt, she would be happier."

"I never said I was not happy," the girl interposed, "though it is only a word we interpret according to temperament. My idea of its meaning may be the opposite of yours, but that need not distress you. It is so exasperating to want everything to think alike."

She drew her hand away from his arm, and moved on over the smooth green turf, towards the terrace.

The eyes of the two men followed her, one with unlimited adoration, the other with a certain bewilderment.

"I never met any one like her," said the younger man, turning to his uncle. "Does nothing really please her?"

"I dare say some things do," he an-

swered, "if, as she says, her way of being happy is a direct contradiction to ours."

"She would not accept the Prince after all?" questioned Neale.

"No. It was the usual answer—'he does not please me.' She does not want rank. Neale, my dear boy, I still hope my wish may be realised. She has never shown a shadow of preference for any man yet, save yourself, and I should feel happy—perfectly happy—in leaving her with you. You know her, and understand her. I am sure you would make her happier than anyone else I know. She is attached to the old place, and it will be yours when I am no more;" and he glanced over the magnificent grounds, and to where the June sunlight lay red and warm upon the beautiful old Abbey.

It was as well he did not see his nephew's face. It had grown white and red by turns. He felt quite unable to frame a syllable in reply.

"You—indeed, sir—you are mistaken," he stammered at last. "If anything, I'm sure Alexis dislikes me. We are always quarrelling."

"Pooh, pooh—so much the better," interposed Sir Roy. "Doesn't some wise man say love ought to begin with 'a little aversion.' Believe me it is much better to marry someone whose tastes and disposition you know, than some stranger with a pretty face or a fascinating manner, whom you meet in society and of whom you know absolutely nothing until you are tied together. Comfort in matrimony is a great deal better than romance."

Neale could hardly restrain a smile. "Comfort and Alexis!" he thought, but he kept silent. He was indeed sorely discomposed by his uncle's remarks. Often as he had hinted at the possibility of a marriage between his cousin and himself, he had never spoken so plainly as this.

"You ought to marry, and soon," persisted Sir Roy. "You have had time enough to sow your wild oats. I am getting on in years, and I should like to see you settled down, and your children running about the old quiet rooms, before I go the way of all flesh."

The young man's face grew cold and stern.

"I have no inclination for marriage yet," he said. "And Alexis dislikes me, if anything. I would not force myself on any woman, were she as lovely as Venus."

"Force!—force!—no one is talking of force!" exclaimed Sir Roy, petulantly.

"And, I tell you, Alexis does not dislike you; far from it. Who should know her if I do not? Come—promise me you will do your best to win her. You can sell out, you know, and live here. I shall not trouble you much. Give me a corner, and my library, and my horse, and I shall be as happy as a King. Why, you look as if I were offering you poison! There are not many men who would have to be asked twice to accept Alexis Kenyon."

"It is not that—I feel the honour most deeply," stammered Neale. "But—I—I was not prepared."

"There is no one else in the background, is there?" asked his uncle, looking keenly at the young man's embarrassed face. "Come, be frank. Surely you have done with follies of that sort."

"Yes, of course," answered Neale, hurriedly. "Indeed—indeed it is only as I said, a natural disinclination for matrimony."

"Oh, well," said the Baronet, laughing good-humouredly. "That will soon wear off, if you accustom yourself to think of it. We all feel like that when we're young. But marriage is not such a terrible bug-bear after all. In a month you'll tell me a different story. Why, here comes Bari with your luggage. You'd like to go to your room, I suppose. We dine at seven as usual. You'll find me in the smoking-room, if you want me."

He waved his hand and went off towards the conservatories, where a white dress was fluttering among leaves and blossoms. He had better settle the matter now that he was in the mood, he thought, and Alexis was generally amenable to his wishes, when she saw his heart was set upon any special thing.

He overtook her among the aisles of palms and cacti, which were like a reminiscence of the Riviera. She turned as she heard his step, and greeted him with her slight, cool smile. "What have you done with Neale?" she asked. "I thought you would have enough to talk about till dinner-time."

"He has gone within," said her father. "He looks very well. Do you not think so? He is pleased to be home again."

"Indeed," she said indifferently. "He did not give me that impression."

"You always snub him and freeze him into silence. You treat him very unkindly, Alexis, and he feels it."

She glanced up quickly.

"Has he been complaining?" she asked, her lip curling scornfully.

"Oh, no; but I could read between the lines. Come, my child, listen to me for a few moments. You have been indulged all your life. I have denied you nothing that it was in my power to give you. Sometimes I think it has spoilt you a little; sometimes, that I would not have you different for all the world. You laugh at the love you win, and yet you have only to appear, to win more. I think you would be happier if you allowed your feelings as much play as you do your intellect; if you did not deny your womanhood all that it has a right to exact—if—"

"My dear father," she interposed lightly, "have you come to deliver a sermon to me? Deny my womanhood! When did I ever do such a thing? You make me fancy I have been wearing a Bloomer costume, or driving tandem, or playing a billiard match, or something equally unfeminine; and I assure you I have done nothing of the sort. I like pretty dresses, and waltzing, and tennis, as much as any woman."

"You know," said her father impatiently, "that is not what I mean. It is the way in which you treat men."

"I treat them as well as they deserve," she said indifferently.

"Will you never care for anyone?" he asked.

She lifted her eyebrows with a pretty pretence of surprise.

"I care for—you," she said, with a sudden softening of the voice.

"Yes, dear," he said, "I know. But that is not all. Some day you must marry—you ought to marry—it is a woman's lot, you know. It makes me very anxious, when I think of your future. I may not live long. My father, you know, died at forty-five, and we have never been a long-lived race. I wish with all my heart, child, that I could see you safely and happily settled before my time comes."

"Don't look so solemn," she said. "There is plenty of time before any contingency so alarming should arise."

"Have you never loved anyone?" he persisted.

"Dear father," she said impatiently. "You know I have not. I am not romantic. I never was. I have no old letters, or faded roses, or keepsakes of any kind in my desk, and yet I am twenty-three, and have been in the world since I was fifteen. No; lovers have no charms for me—and marriage less."

"Still," he insisted, "you ought to marry."

She made a wry face. "I fail to see the obligation. If I were a Crown Princess—"

"You are my Princess," he said tenderly; "and I should like to see your children at my knee, and to know that you were happy and sheltered in a husband's love, before life and I had bade farewell to one another."

Her face flushed faintly; she turned a little aside.

"I fail to see how that could add to your happiness. I am sure," and she laughed again, "it could not possibly help mine."

"Yes, it would; you do not know," he urged. "All your charms, your conquests, your successes, do not satisfy your heart."

"I should get tired of any man," she said. "I could not help it. They irritate me—they weary me. They could give me nothing for the sacrifice of myself. Marriage always seems to me a mistake. Binding yourself for life to one person, promising impossibilities! How can one answer for one's feelings? You can't swear to be the same in ten or twenty years' time as you are to-day; one's features alter, so does one's nature. You make marriage as commonplace as a lease—but not so comfortable. You can change or let your house again if you get tired of it—you can't your husband."

"Oh, Alexis," cried her father in despair, "you are too provoking. It is not right, it is not natural. Men are not so bad as you make out. They can be constant—steadfast—true."

"Not for long," she persisted; "and not to their own wives—to someone else's, I grant. They are like children: what is denied becomes immediately invested with a hundred charms; what is possessed becomes valueless."

"You make such sweeping assertions," he said impatiently, "you class all together. It is not fair. One man, at all events, has loved you very constantly—ever since he and you were boy and girl, despite your coldness and indifference."

"Or rather, you should say, because of it. Whose cause have you come to plead now?"

"Your cousin's!" he said abruptly.

She started. Again that faint rose-flush warmed her cheek.

"Nonsense!" she said sharply. "Neale—why, he cares no more for me than——"

"He does. Indeed he does," said her father eagerly; "only he has not courage to say so, you treat him so cruelly. And, Alexis, it is the dearest wish of my heart.

The place will be his, you know that, and he understands you better than anyone else. He is not very brilliant or very talented, but he is honest, and true, and deeply affectionate. He will make you an admirable and indulgent husband. Will you consider the matter?"

"Oh," she said, and laughed a little, "that is easily promised. But really I think you are mistaken. If Neale cares for me—at all—he has never given me a hint of it."

"Because you always ridicule love and declarations. They never touch, they only amuse you. You treat men just as you like, and do with them as you please, and they bow to your will and submit. He knows that; and in his way he is proud. He would not care to be thrown aside like—like the others."

"I prefer a man to do his own wooing," she said.

"He will do it well enough when the time comes," said her father. "But, perhaps, he is afraid as yet of being added to the list of those you have made ridiculous. It is difficult to understand you, Alexis."

"My likings have generally grown into contempt," she said. "But that was not my fault."

"You might be very happy with Neale," urged her father.

"And the long lease?" she said, smiling. "I am afraid it would be a risk. True, as you say, we know the worst of one another. That is something."

"Then will you think of it, for my sake, dear child?"

"Well," she said reflectively, "it is not a very lover-like speech to make; but I would certainly think of it for your sake more readily than for his."

"And he may speak for himself some day?"

"Oh," she said, laughing, "he will not woo me half so eloquently as you have done. I think he had better make you his ambassador—if it is necessary to say any more. There is no hurry for a year or two."

THE FOLK-LORE OF MARRIAGE.

IN FOUR PARTS. PART I.

HAVING dealt with Love and Courtship in previous articles,* I now come to matters superstitious in relation to Marriage, together with a few customs which are devoid

* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. xxxix., pp. 269, 274, 515.

of superstition, but may be found interesting.

To begin at the beginning. Banns of marriage have their origin, like many of our Ecclesiastical regulations, in the ancient practice of the Roman Catholic Church. The earliest enactment on the subject in the English Church is the eleventh Canon of the Synod of Westminster, 1200, which rules that no marriage shall be contracted until the banns have been thrice published in the parish church. This was confirmed by the sixty-second Canon of the Synod of London, 1603-4. By an Act of 26 George the Second, cap. xxxiii., the publication was required to be on three consecutive Sundays only. This Act was superseded by Act 4, George the Fourth, cap. lxxvi., which provides that the marriage must take place within three months after the publication of the banns. Tertullus, who died 240 A.D., states that the Primitive Church was forewarned of marriages, and in 1215 it was regularly established by the Fourth Lateran Council.

Rev. C. J. Egerton relates the following story, apropos of the publication of banns: "I have heard from a brother clergyman an incident, the truth of which internal evidence may be said to guarantee, inasmuch as it seems beyond the power of invention. The good old minister of whom it was told always used to have the book containing the banns put on the reading desk just at his right hand. One Sunday morning he began as usual, 'I publish the banns of marriage between —,' and, putting down his hand in all confidence for the book, found to his dismay that it was not there! In his nervousness, while searching for the missing register, he kept on repeating the formula, 'I publish the banns of marriage between —I publish the banns of marriage between,' till at last the clerk from beneath, in sheer pity, came to the rescue with a suggestion whispered loudly enough to be heard all over the church, 'Between the cushion and the desk, sir.' The book had simply slipped under the cushion. The result of the accident was a publication of banns which I should imagine to be unique."

Space forbids me entering into the various forms of marriage practised over the "Border," such as "jumping the broom." One, however, I think will be found new and interesting, and that is the Scotch custom of Marrying by Meal. This will best be illustrated by an actual fact.

In the year 1867, two persons left Dalkeith for Galashiels, and not having the requisite funds to get married by a minister, they each took a handful of meal and knelt down facing each other, after placing a basin between them. Both then placed their hands full of meal in the basin, and mixed it, in token that they "would not sever till death did them part." After swearing to this effect on a Bible, they both rose up and declared themselves man and wife. They afterwards returned to Dalkeith, where they afterwards resided as man and wife, the marriage being considered perfectly legal.

Morganatic or left-handed marriages were at one time very common, but are now extremely rare. In some Continental countries they may take place between a man of elevated rank and a woman of lower degree. One result of them, however, is that they neither raise the wife to the level of her husband, nor the children to the rank of their father. In such marriages, the left hand instead of the right is given by the man, hence the term, "left-handed marriage."

The custom of the bride wearing a veil on the occasion of her wedding is, without doubt, of Eastern origin. Amongst Anglo-Saxons it was held over the heads of the bride and bridegroom to hide the blushes of the happy lady from the company. This little compliment was not paid to a widow on her re-marriage, as her blushes were supposed to have been exhausted. This custom was gradually superseded by the Eastern and more graceful practice of wearing long, sweeping, gauzy veils.

How the orange-blossom first came to be used at marriages is veiled in obscurity. In France, this custom is a matter of much pride and importance, inasmuch as it is a testimonial of purity, not only of the bride herself, but of integrity and morality in the character of her relatives.

In the province of Franche Comté, to wear the orange-blossom is considered a sacred right, obtained by undoubted character, and, as such, proudly maintained. Should any act of imprudence in early life, implying even a suspicion of taint upon the honour of the maiden, be known, the use of the orange-blossom is sternly forbidden.

In almost every village or small town in France, the bride entitled to wear the crown of orange-blossom has this beautiful certificate of her purity either framed or placed under a glass shade; and it is religiously preserved, if possible, even through

generations, as an indisputable testimonial of undoubted character.

In Germany, the duties of the bridesmaid have just a tinge of superstition about them. It is one of their duties on the morning of the marriage day to carry to the bride a myrtle wreath, for which they had subscribed on the previous evening. This they place on her head, and at night remove it, when it is placed in the bride's hand, she being at the time blindfolded. The bridesmaids then dance around her, while she endeavours to place the wreath on one of their heads. Whoever is fortunate enough to be thus decorated will, it is believed, be herself a wife before another year has passed away.

In removing the bridal wreath and veil, the bridesmaids are careful to throw away every pin, or the bride will be overtaken by misfortune; while any unwary bridesmaid who retains one of these useful little articles, will materially lessen her chances of "getting off."

Like many other German superstitions, this has found its way into England, though it has not yet become a general belief.

Throwing an old slipper after a bride and bridegroom, when starting on their honeymoon, is supposed to have taken its origin from a Jewish custom, and signifies the obedience of the wife as well as the supremacy of the husband. A shoe is thrown for luck on other occasions besides a marriage. Ben Jonson says:

Hurl after me an old shoe,
I'll be merry, whatever I do.

It is related that, many years ago, when lotteries were permitted, the custom of throwing a shoe, taken from the left foot, after persons was practised for good luck. This custom has existed in Norfolk and other counties from time immemorial, not only at weddings, but on all occasions where good luck is required.

A cattle dealer required his wife to "trull her left shoe after him" when he started for Norwich to purchase a lottery ticket. As he drove off on his errand, he looked round to see if his wife had performed the charm, and received the shoe in his face with such force as to black his eyes. He went and bought his ticket, which turned up a prize of six hundred pounds, and he always attributed his luck to the extra dose of shoe which he got. The custom as it originally existed is dying out, for, whereas our forefathers threw old shoes after the wedding equipage, we, in this more luxurious age,

purchase new white satin slippers for the purpose.

The origin of this custom may be traced from the words in Psalm cviii., "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," meaning thereby that success should attend the methods used to subdue the Edomites. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the superstitious custom has arisen from this construction of these words.

This brings me to a very interesting part of the ancient marriage ceremony, which makes one long to have been a parson in the days gone by. I refer to the kiss once given by the clergyman after tying the nuptial knot. This kiss in the church is enjoined by both the York Missal and the Sarum Manual. It is expressly mentioned in the following line from the old play of *The Insatiate Countess*, by Marston: "The kisse thou gav'st me in the church here take." That this custom was not always pleasing to Mrs. Minister is illustrated in the following anecdote:

"'I notice,' said a clergyman's wife to her husband, 'that it is no longer fashionable for the minister to kiss the bride at the wedding ceremony.'

"'Yes,' sadly responded the good man, 'many of the pleasant features connected with the wedding ceremony have been discarded, and—'

"'What's that?' demanded his wife ominously.

"'I mean—I mean,' he stammered, 'that the senseless custom of kissing the bride should have been abolished long ago.'

"'Oh!' replied the mollified wife, resuming her paper."

It may not be generally known that the word "honeymoon" is derived from the ancient Teutons, and means the drinking for thirty days after marriage of metheglin, mead, or hydromel, a kind of wine made from honey. Atilla, a celebrated King of the Huns, who boasted of the appellation, "The Scourge of God," is said to have died on his nuptial night from an uncommon effusion of blood, brought on by indulging too freely in hydromel at his weddingfeast. The term "honeymoon" now signifies the first month after marriage, or so much of it as is spent from home. John Tobin, in *The Honeymoon*, thus refers to it:

This truth is manifest—a gentle wife
Is still the sterling comfort of man's life;
To fools a torment, but a lasting boon
To those who wisely keep their honeymoon.

Johnson describes it as "the first month after marriage, when there is nothing but tenderness and pleasure;" and Addison says, "A man should keep his finery for the latter season of marriage, and not begin to dress till the honeymoon is over."

In Alsace and some places round about there still exists a traditional usage, evidently a relic of ruder times, that at the close of the marriage-feast the bride shall give one of her garters to the bridegroom's best man, who forthwith divides it into small pieces, which are distributed amongst the guests. In some manner the incident is associated with good luck, but how I have been unable to ascertain, though it is pretty certain that the bride always provides herself with a new and splendid pair of garters for the occasion.

I now come to a more matter-of-fact part of my subject, the giving of presents at weddings. Pin money, as a lady's dowry, had its origin with the introduction of pins, which were so expensive and withal so necessary to a lady's comfort, that a separate allowance was made to her for their purchase. The amount of the pin money formed at one time an item in the wedding contracts of the rich. Pins were first introduced prior to the year 1347, when twelve thousand were delivered from the Royal wardrobe for the use of Princess Joan, and in the year 1400, the Duchess of Orleans purchased of Jehan de Breconnier, Espinglier, of Paris, several thousand long and short pins, beside five hundred "*de la façon d'Angleterre*." In the fourteenth century, makers were only allowed to sell their commodity openly on the two great feast days of the year, and ladies and city dames flocked to the depots to buy them, having first been provided with "pin money" by their husbands.

Anciently a considerable sum of money was put into a purse or plate, and presented by the bridegroom to the bride on the wedding night; a custom common to the Greeks as well as the Romans, and which appears to have prevailed among the Jews and many Eastern nations. It was changed in the Middle Ages, and in the North of Europe, for the Morgengabe, or morning present, the bride having the privilege, the morning after marriage, of asking for any sum of money or any estate in her husband's possession that she pleased, and which could not, in honour, be refused by him. Something of the same kind prevailed in England under the name of

the "Dow," or endowment purse. A trace of this is still kept up in rural Cumberland, where the bridegroom provides himself with gold and silver, and when the service reaches the point, "with all my worldly goods I thee endow," he takes up the money, hands the clergyman his fee, and pours the rest into a handkerchief, which is held by the bridesmaid for the bride. When Clovis was married to the Princess Clotilde, he offered by his proxy a sou and a dernier, which became the marriage offering, by law, in France; and to this day pieces of money are given to the bride, varying only in value according to the rank of the parties.

From some old plays it appears that knives were formerly part of the accoutrement of an English as well as of a German bride. The practice of wearing such articles and purses was pretty general among European ladies at the end of the sixteenth century. Wedding knives were presented, among other articles of a domestic character. Amongst the Norwegians, in Pagan times, the bride's wedding outfit included a sword, an axe, and a shield, with which to defend herself against any attack of her liege lord.

When Rolf, King of Norway, and Eric's daughter were married, they sat throned in state, whilst the King's courtiers passed before them and deposited offerings of oxen, sheep, sucking-pigs, horses, geese, and other live stock. Formerly, amongst poor people, there existed a custom of having Penny Weddings, at which the guests gave a contribution towards the feast and to endow the bride. These, however, were reprobated by the straiter-laced sort as leading to disorder and licentiousness, but it was found impossible altogether to suppress them. All that could be done was to place restrictions upon the amount allowed to be given; in Scotland, the limit was fixed at five shillings. The custom is not quite obsolete at the present day, though it is only practised in places far removed from the "busy hum." It is from customs such as I have attempted to describe that our present elaborate system of giving presents at weddings has sprung, customs that can be traced back to the dark ages.

With our forefathers, a great deal depended on the day and the month whether a marriage would be happy or not. For instance, they believed in the silly saw—

Marry in May,
Rue for aye,

a superstition to which some ancient

writers, including Ovid, gave credence. It was also believed in by Sir Walter Scott, in more modern times, for we find that he hurried home from the Continent to prevent the marriage of his daughter to Mr. Lockhart taking place in the "unlucky month." Why May should be considered an unfavourable time for entering into the happiest and most sacred of human relationships is not at all clear; but though we laugh at the notion, it still has its weight, as evidenced from the fact that it is the month in which fewest marriages are contracted.

A beautiful wedding custom prevails now, and has for centuries existed, in some parts of the Tyrol. When a maiden is about to be married, before she leaves the parental roof to go to the church, her mother hands to her a handkerchief termed the "tear kerchief." It is made of newly-spun linen, and has never been used. With this the bride dries away her tears when she leaves her father's home, and while she stands at the altar. After the marriage is over, and the bride has, with her husband, entered her new home, she carefully folds up the handkerchief, and places it, unwashed, in her linen-closet, where it remains untouched until, old and wrinkled, the bride of long ago falls asleep in that rest which knows no earthly awakening. Then the "tear kerchief" is taken from its place, and spread over the placid face of the dead. The custom is both simple and beautiful, savouring of the homely life of the people with whom it finds favour.

The Japanese are extremely superstitious, and have innumerable signs and tokens by which to regulate their conduct and beliefs. At a marriage ceremony neither bride nor bridegroom wears any clothing of a purple colour, lest their marriage tie be soon loosed, as purple is the colour most liable to fade. Every nation has its superstitions on this subject, and strangely enough, while other beliefs have died out, and are forgotten, these remain to us, some with almost their original force.

Half a century ago a Welsh writer, describing a marriage in the Principality, said: "Ill may it befall a traveller who has the misfortune of meeting a Welsh wedding on the road. He would be inclined to suppose that he had fallen in with a company of lunatics escaped from their confinement. It is the custom of the whole party who are invited, both men and women, to ride full-speed to the church porch, and the person who arrives there

first has some privilege or distinction at the marriage feast. To this important object all minor considerations give way. The stranger will be fortunate if he escape being overthrown by an onset, the occasion of which puts out of sight that urbanity so generally characteristic of the people."

Another custom that has very often been described, was known as the "Bidding." The "bidder" in former times was a person of a respectable and popular character, possessed of much eloquence, considerable talent, and an inexhaustible fund of native mirth and rustic humour. At the castles of the principal chieftains his constant ambition was to arrive just at dinner time, when the lord and his retainers were found assembled in the great hall, in high spirits. Then rattling his bâton against the floor to procure attention, and dropping a graceful bow, he began his harangue.

There was generally a prescribed form adapted to these purposes; but the orator indulged in occasional deviations from the beaten track, displaying his talents in mirthful sallies and humorous parodies on celebrated passages from favourite authors. If the parties were of the lower order in society, he gave their pedigree with affected gravity; drew up a mock history of their exploits, and of their brave and generous actions; expatiated on their personal excellences, and on the good qualities of their ancestors; descanted on the joys of matrimony, and the miseries of celibacy; and when he imagined that he had succeeded in putting his audience into good humour, he returned with great address to his subject, applied himself successively to the principal persons present, and endeavoured to extract a promise from them, which, when obtained, was regularly entered on his tablets. His reputation as an orator, and his reward as a bidder, depended on the success of his eloquence and on the number of promises which he obtained. When his oration was closed, the "hirlas," or silver-tipped horn, was put into his hands, foaming with ale or sparkling with mead. He thanked his audience for their friendly attention, drank their healths, and with a bow modestly retired.

On the morning of the nuptial day, the bride and bridegroom, privately attended by their particular friends, repaired to church at an early hour, when the ceremony was performed, and their title to the enjoyment of domestic happiness inserted in the usual records.

On their return the bride and bride-

groom separated, and repaired to the mansions of their respective friends. In the great hall they made their appearance to receive the congratulations of their visitors. Considerable address was requisite, in order to recollect the names and make proper enquiries after the families of each particular visitor, and when the youth or the inexperience of the bride or bridegroom rendered them unequal to the task, they were assisted by friends of maturer years, who refreshed their memories and guided their erring judgements.

The names of the visitors were entered by a proper person in a book provided for the occasion, that, under similar circumstances, the visit might be returned, and the amount of whatever compliment they left might be faithfully restored whenever it should appear to be required. The tokens of friendship, or of neighbourly benevolence, which they determined to bestow were deposited on a large silver dish provided for the purpose. In a lesser degree this ancient custom is kept up to the present day in the less frequented parts of the Principality.

The "Bidder" ceased his avocation long ago, but as late as the present decade announcements have appeared in the Welsh newspapers, intimating that certain persons intended taking upon themselves the conjugal yoke, and would thankfully receive any offerings that might be forwarded for their acceptance. The following is a copy of a modern "bidding" notice:

"As we intend to enter the matrimonial state on Thursday, the seventeenth day of July next, we are encouraged by our friends to make a bidding on the occasion, the same day, at the Butchers' Arms, Carmarthen, when and where the favour of your good and agreeable company is humbly solicited; and whatever donation you may be pleased to confer on us then will be thankfully received, warmly acknowledged, and cheerfully repaid whenever called for, on a similar occasion, by your most obedient servants, John Jones, Mary Evans."

Of all the curious marriage customs that have been handed down to posterity as having been indulged in, perhaps one of the most curious is that which at one time (not very far distant) prevailed in Scotland to an almost universal degree, and from the manner in which it was carried out was called "Creeling the bridegroom." How, or when, or where it first originated is lost completely in the mists of obscurity;

but I think it is perfectly safe to assert that when first practised, superstition had something to do with it.

The mode of procedure in the village of Galashiels was as follows: Early in the day after the marriage, those interested in the proceeding assembled at the house of the newly wedded couple, bringing with them a "creel" or basket, which they filled with stones. The young husband, on being brought to the door, had the creel firmly fixed to his back, and with it in this position had to run the round of the town, or at least the chief portion of it, followed by a number of men to see that he did not drop his burden; the only condition on which he was allowed to do so being, that his wife should come after him and kiss him. As relief depended altogether upon the wife, it would sometimes happen that the husband did not need to run more than a few yards; but when she was more than ordinarily bashful, or wished to have a little sport at the expense of her lord and master—which it may be supposed would not unfrequently be the case—he had to carry his load a considerable distance. This custom was very strictly enforced, and the person who was last creeled had charge of the ceremony, and he was naturally anxious that no one should escape. The practice, as far as Galashiels was concerned, came to an end about one hundred years ago, with the person of one Robert Young, who, on the ostensible plea of a "sore back," lay abed all the day after his marriage, and obstinately refused to get up and be creeled. He had, it may be added in extenuation, been twice married before, and had on each occasion gone through the ceremony of being creeled, and now, no doubt, felt that he had had quite enough of creeling.

A KANAKA ROYAL FAMILY.

EVER since they were named by Captain Cook, rather more than a century ago, the Sandwich Islands have been rapidly losing their population. This sad fact is a proof that Nature does not pay us out all at once; she mostly gives long credit, and then, when the debt is forgotten, exacts not only the old principal, but a terrible amount of interest to boot. The present Sandwich Islanders would, I believe, compare favourably in morals with average

Europeans; yet the dwindling away has till now gone on at a pace which threatens total extinction in very few generations. Why? Because since, in 1789, nine years after Cook's visit, the American sloop *Pandora* anchored off Maui, English and American whalers made the islands a house of call, with results which, till the missionaries gained a real and wholesome influence, were disastrous to the native population. It has been a case of natural selection.

Jack and Jonathan, off a long voyage in the South Seas, behaved as they would in Ratcliff Highway, or Wapping, or the Bowery. The only difference was that they brought their drink with them, and raw rum is a very different drink from kawa. Those among us whose constitutions were least able to resist alcoholic poisoning have, throughout our islands and especially in their most alcoholised districts, been gradually killed off. The remainder are more or less proof against it; some sadly less, as doctors and magistrates can testify; but still the least fortified of them has immeasurably more stamina—power of standing against the diseases brought on by drink—than a Kanaka (South Sea Islander), none of whose ancestors had ever tasted spirits.

The same of other diseases. We are not quite proof against measles or smallpox; but, despite occasional sporadic outbursts, these and other diseases don't cut us down as the Black Death did more than five hundred years ago. A measles epidemic, spread from a single case imported from Sydney by one of King Cacobau's suite, swept off a third of the population of the Fiji Isles; smallpox has before now annihilated a Red Indian tribe; drink (that vilest of all vile compounds known as "Cape Smoke") is killing off the Basutos, the noblest of the South African tribes. No wonder the Sandwich Islanders should have been more than decimated by the diseases and the drink brought amongst them by the disreputable sailors who, a century ago, formed the staple of English and American South-Sea whaling crews.

Among the Sandwich Islanders some of the imported diseases often took the form of leprosy of a very ghastly kind. The first step (taken not so long ago) towards saving the race was to do what the Jews did—separate the lepers. There is now a leper-island, wholly given up to these poor creatures, on the landing-place of which may well be written: "All hope abandon

ye who enter here." The only non-leprous being on Leper-Island is a noble Roman Catholic priest, a Frenchman, who, when quite young, volunteered for this imprisonment for life (for he never can be let out lest he should bring the taint with him), in order to minister to these poor creatures.

What with alcohol, then, and diseases of which their bodies had had no previous experience, there is no need to rave like Kingsley about "rotting races." Any race would rot under such conditions. We rotted, tough as we now are, under the epidemics of the Middle Ages—the Black Death, and the Sweating Sickness, and the Plague. Those of our forefathers and foremothers who were likely to take such diseases badly, took them and died of them.

Read the records of the Black Death, and you will see that it was for many an English parish a case of depopulation as severe as what has taken place in Oahu and its fellow islands. There is just one difference—after such a visitation a European country soon makes up its numbers; population sometimes seems to go ahead "by leaps and bounds." Such a country has a recuperative force which is wanting wherever a race fails through contact with whites.

Of course, the waste of war has had its share in reducing the Sandwich Islanders from four hundred thousand (how could Cook count them?) to less than forty thousand.

In New Zealand, where Heki played Napoleon, and, coming to England, got King George to give him plenty of muskets and ammunition, this waste has been much more destructive than disease. The old battles, even when they wound up with a cannibal feast, were nothing compared to the wholesale shooting down by Heki's tribe of other tribes who had no firearms, and who still, with traditionary intrepidity, stood their ground against the new weapons.

The waste of war did not last long in the Sandwich Islands, but, while it did last, it sensibly lessened the population. There had always been plenty of fighting; Juan Gaetano, the Spaniard, who discovered the islands in 1555, describes the natives as continually at war, and as being cannibals to boot. In Cook's time, Kamehameha, "the lonely one," son of the chief of Kona, a district of Hawaii, was already planning to unite all the islands under his own sovereignty. He was very young when his father died;

and his kinsman Kiwalao, chief of the neighbouring district of Kau, coveted the rich fisheries of Kona, and came to the funeral at the head of all his warriors.

"Don't bring so many mourners," was the message which met him before he reached the frontier.

"I will," he replied; and so Kamehameha gathered his clan, and there was a battle on the shore, which lasted eight days, till the death of Kiwalao led to the dispersal of his followers.

Master of Kau, the young Kamehameha soon conquered, partly by arms, partly by lavish gifts, the rest of Hawaii, and then led his troops across the sea to Maui, the chief of which had helped Kiwalao. There was hard fighting; a river was so choked with corpses, that its course was changed, and the battle was called the fight of Deadmen's Dyke. But the conquered were by no means thoroughly beaten. For some time, whenever Kamehameha was in Maui there would be a rising in Hawaii, and vice versa. Moreover, it was easy to get to Maui, across some forty miles of sea; but how was this Kanaka Napoleon to conquer the remoter islands, some of which, like Kawai, were sundered from Hawaii by nearly three hundred miles?

John Metcalf, captain of the Pandora afore-said, seemed to him the very man (for, unlike Cook, Metcalf didn't pose as a god) to help him in his design. The Pandora had come for a cargo of sandal-wood, in exchange for which Metcalf gave nails, hatchets, and knives, but no guns. He made such a profit by selling the wood in China that he was soon back again, but this time Kamehameha insisted on a ship's boat—so much more seaworthy he thought, than his war canoes. Metcalf refused; so the night before he was to sail, a strong party of Kanakas came on board and tried to seize the cutter. They were beaten off, and the sloop opened on them a murderous fire, and hastily weighed anchor, leaving ashore a quartermaster, Isaac Davis, and an English sailor, John Young. These two Kamehameha rescued from the fury of his subjects, and made them teach him the use of the white man's tools and how to build boats. By-and-by he raised them to the rank of chiefs, giving them as wives ladies of noble birth. The descendants of these sailors still hold high rank in the islands. Queen Emma, who lately died, aged forty-nine, was daughter of the Chief George Naea, and Fanny, John Young's daughter. How

strange that, sixty years after this common sailor's death, his granddaughter should have been received at Windsor with the honours due to Royalty, and should have had the Queen and the Prince of Wales as sponsors for her only child!

Kamehameha was not long-lived; he died in 1819. But he had succeeded in making himself master of the whole group of islands, and he had opened them to trade and to European ideas. From England and America he had obtained artisans, sailors, arms, and missionaries.

In 1793 he had given Vancouver a right royal welcome, and the navigator, in exchange for the presents which the King heaped upon him, had left him a plough and harrow, and taught him how to use them, leaving him also seed-corn and the seeds of various plants, besides tools, and iron to make his own nails. When he next came, Vancouver brought him a bull and five cows, and a flock of sheep—ancestors of the vast flocks and herds now pasturing on the islands. America soon saw how valuable the whole group is for whalers to put in at and revictual. Here, too, the New York merchants scented a good market for their unsaleable goods, and New England missionaries worked, with great apparent success, at the difficult task of teaching Christianity to the Kanakas. They were specially great in schools. Emma, the future Queen, who, on the death of her parents, had been adopted by the rich English doctor, Thomas Rooke, went along with the young people of the Royal family, to the Honolulu Mission School for the children of chiefs, and got the sort of education which, in those days, was given to the Upper Ten in Boston or New York.

The missionaries did much good; they completely changed the face of Sandwich Island society, and made it decent and orderly; insisted on everybody being clad in long cotton robes; made them all turn teetotallers; taught them the three Rs; and, in fact, did everything except inspire the race with vitality. They could not make the islanders a long-lived breed; of the Royal family especially, not one has, since we knew the group, reached the Psalmist's limit of age.

Kamehameha the Second's reign was very short, and was wholly taken up with disputes between the missionaries and the traders and whalers, both equally indignant at the restrictions which the missionaries placed on business and on pleasure. The

whalers thought it very hard lines that, on landing at their traditional pleasure-haunts, they found the women shut up like nuns; and the drink-shops only open under severe restrictions; and the power of hitting out right and left, and "nobbling" a Kanaka who objected to Jack or Jonathan doing just as he liked in his—the native's—house, exchanged for a strict executive, which really tried to punish all breaches of missionary-made laws. The traders, too, backed up by planters, who had been settling in large numbers, wanted to be free from missionary control. Freedom meant the sale of unlimited gin and rum; it meant the power of buying freehold land cheap, and of growing sugar out of which to make more rum. Happily the missionaries had the ear of the King, and just managed to hold their ground, though to do so they felt constrained to join in the foreigners' cry for annexation to America. The seizing by France of Tahiti and the Marquesas accentuated this cry: "If you don't straightway put yourself under Uncle Sam's flag, some fine day the French will come and make you all Roman Catholics by main force."

Then the Californian gold fever, in 1848, gave a great impulse to the annexationists. Here was a splendid market suddenly opened for oranges, fresh vegetables, cattle. The island ports were filled as if by magic with eager Yankee skippers, who paid, not in rum, but in hard cash; and the Kanakas were told that this was but a foretaste of what would be the normal state of things if only they would be annexed. The step might be taken at any moment; for when Kamehameha the Third, succeeding his short-lived father, had got from France and England guarantees of independence, the United States had distinctly refused to join.

"We don't covet your little bits of islands; but we shan't say we shall prevent you from joining us, if by-and-by you like to do so," said the Cabinet of Washington; and the very Democratic Constitution passed in 1840 by Dr. Judd and Mr. Wyllie, an eccentric Scot who, having made a large fortune in Mexico, settled in the islands, tended, of course, still more to draw them towards the States.

Had the third Kamehameha lived, they must have drifted into annexation. But he, like the rest of his race, had "brandy in the blood," and when he died suddenly in 1854, the direct line came to an end. He was succeeded by his adopted son, Prince

Alexander Liholiho, whose mother was a daughter of Kamehameha the First.

With the new King came in a thoroughly new policy; for, in 1848, he and his elder brother Lot had made the grand tour, and had got thoroughly in love with monarchy and aristocracy. Naturally enough; for in the States—that land of theoretic equality—which Dr. Judd had arranged for them to visit first, the young Liholihos had found themselves treated like "niggers." France was too busy with her revolution to take much notice of them; but in England they were made a great deal of. Royalty took them up, and they became "the fashion," as Prince Le Boo had been in the good old days of George the Third.

So Kamehameha the Fourth (that was his title) was dead against annexation; and when, in 1856, he married his school-fellow, Emma, he might have got on as well as any King in the world, could he have had the moral courage to do as our Henry the Fifth is said to have done—deport all the ill-conditioned Falstaffs and Nymms who, drunken and dissolute as the crew of Comus, stuck to him under the title of aides-de-camp, secretaries, and personal friends.

Queen Emma eagerly put in practice the lessons of her adopted father, Dr. Rooke. She founded a hospital, with good, well-paid physicians; fenced off Leper-Island; and took every means of making head against the rapid decrease of the native race. So long as her husband was with her, her influence kept him straight; but among the Kanakas woman has always been the inferior being; the missionaries, moreover, had, from her cradle, taught the Queen submission; and so she only remonstrated, instead of insisting on the banishment of the King's "friends."

Once she did insist. The Royal brothers, their sister Princess Victoria, and the Queen, had been dining with the aides and secretaries. The ladies had retired, and smoking and drinking was going on. Suddenly there was a woman's cry in the Palace garden; and when the King and his brother rushed out, they found that an aide had grossly insulted the Princess. He was given in charge; but next day his young wife begged so hard: "he had drunk too much, and he made a sad mistake; he took the Princess for one of the Queen's waiting-women," that the King would have let him off. "No," said Emma, "his excuse is worse than his crime.

Are my ladies-in-waiting to be treated in that way by a drunken Englishman?"

So the aide was shipped next night to San Francisco, vowing that he would take vengeance for the insult offered in his person to the British flag.

For some time the King kept straight; and, making Mr. Wyllie his Foreign Minister and Prince Lot his Home Secretary, he had the satisfaction of getting the Queen and the Prince of Wales to stand sponsors for his son. But to get a Royal god-mother does not, in these days, ensure that protection of which the poor Kanakas stood in need.

The States stood aside, annexation seeming hopeless; but France came in, and insisted on free importation of wines and spirits; and, as England would not say "No," Mr. Wyllie had to give way, and, in 1857, to throw the country open to the fiery deluge. Of course we did not say "no," for, though the French out of bravado insisted on the treaty, it was we (and the Germans) who profited by it. For one hogshhead of French liquor, at least a hundred came in from London and Hamburg.

Two years after, the King and Queen, the aides, and Mr. Neilson, the private secretary, were spending two months' holiday in Maui. Neilson was a sad drunkard, whom Emma had often begged her husband to get rid of. It was an idle time, away from Court etiquette; and every night drink and play went on unchecked. The King, well educated and cultured, behaved like a polished gentleman so long as he was sober; but was liable, when drunk, to fits of almost madness. Day after day, despite Emma's remonstrances, he sat with Neilson and the rest, soaking himself with brandy.

Once a quarrel arose; Neilson was grossly impudent, and the King, with an oath, shot him dead. Full of remorse, he wanted to abdicate; but the people would not hear of his doing so. Addresses of condolence poured in; and he seemed more of a King than ever when he had got from England a Bishop and whole staff of High Church clergy.

The Queen went along with him in this sudden change from the simple Nonconformity of the missionaries to Anglican ritual. She hoped the interest he took in it would keep him from drink; and so it did, combined with his sorrow for the death, in 1862, of his young son.

"I shall die young," he used often to

say, "but I shall outlive him." He did, but he outlived him less than eighteen months.

Prince Lot, whom he had named as his successor, had much more strength of character than his brother. Like his great ancestor, he loved to be alone; and, on his accession, the fool's paradise of aides and secretaries came to an end. He kept his own counsel so well that, in 1864, when the delegates met to reform the Constitution, the annexation party looked for an immediate success.

Everybody was startled when the King sent down to the House a proposal to substitute for universal suffrage—they had had it for years—a property qualification, and to limit naturalisation, and the power of voting, to those who had been some years on the islands. This was a thunder-clap; but King Lot did not stop there. When the delegates hummed and ha'd and proposed amendments, he came into their midst and said:

"This matter is of vital importance. If it is not passed, I see that we shall drift into a Republic; and you don't seem inclined to pass it, so I dissolve Parliament at once."

Happier than Charles the First, he had the people with him. The American party tried to stir up a riot, but failed, and King Kamehameha the Fifth was so firmly in the saddle that Emma thought she might safely go on a visit to Europe. Everyone knows how well she was received by our Queen, and how, with her simple dignity and unaffected goodness, she showed herself worthy of her good reception.

The French Emperor and Empress, too, treated this granddaughter of an English sailor with marked respect. She spent a winter in Italy; was fêted in the United States, and conveyed by the United States' Admiral Thatcher from San Francisco to Honolulu.

The sight of poverty, unknown in her islands, had impressed her more than the splendours of Windsor or Versailles; and she came back more than ever devoted to good works. Would she marry the King? No; her High Church feelings shrank from committing, even for the good of her country, what Anglicans call sin. Lot was so much chagrined at her final refusal, that he would not marry; and at his death, in 1872, the Kamehamehas came to a total end. Unhappily, the Queen refused the offer of the throne, and gave her support to Lot's cousin, Prince William Lunalilo, very popular, but very drunken, though

seemingly of such an iron constitution that his orgies were supposed to do him no harm. William was a Philippe Egalité among the chiefs, the only one who had gone in for republican institutions. True to his principles, he would not adopt a successor, and thirteen months after his accession the throne was again vacant. This time Emma came forward as a candidate; but, though she was the idol of the lower classes, the House decided, by thirty-nine votes to six, in favour of David Kalakaua, whose large family seemed to give hope of a fixed succession. There was a riot; the Assembly House was wrecked, the archives burnt, the furniture destroyed; everything done to give good Queen Emma the greatest sorrow at the folly of her partisans. The sailors from the English and American ships of war had to be called in to establish order.

Last March Queen Emma died; and now "the King of the Cannibal Islands"—for one of his predecessors was the hero of the good old song—has taken a new line. He is going in for annexation. Perhaps he has a native Bismarck among his counselors, or a foreigner whose personal ambition outruns his zeal for the extension of trade. No doubt, too, the news—we trust it is not premature—that the native will not surely die out—that, since the precautions against leprosy and the stamping out of other diseases, there has even been a very slight increase—has given him courage. Anyhow, he is said to be asserting a suzerainty over the Marshall Islands and the Gilberts—about as far from him as California is—and even suggesting that he ought to have a word in the settlement of the dispute about the Carolines. Bravo, Kanaka King; the great thing is to ensure the persistence of your race. It would be a pity for that strange people who inhabit what some take to be the mountain peaks of a submerged continent to die out; and if only their chiefs give up fire-water, and listen to the doctor as well as to the missionary, there is some hope of their lasting on. The missionaries have done a wonderful work in the Sandwich Isles; the marvellous transformation is mainly due to the dogged zeal of men like Judd. But it is not enough to teach every Kanaka to read and write, and to clothe them all in calico—which, by the way, has helped to kill them off, for, throwing aside their new-fangled garments when they go to bed, they are more susceptible than of yore to night chills. "Civilisation is a fine thing," the

Kanakas might say, "but if we are all to be sent to heaven in the process, it might have been better to remain barbarians."

FORTH.

NOT my own waves that thunder on the shore;
Not my own wild wind sweeping o'er the seas;
Not my own music in the mighty roar
That makes its chords of all the yellowing trees;
Not my own skies that shine in gloom and gleam,
Over the turbid waters in their strife;
Not my own wide horizon's pale grey dream,
In yon faint glimpse of the fair hills of Fife.
Yet, as two meeting in a foreign land,
Hailing the subtle link of glance or tone,
Stretch eagerly to clasp a kindred hand,
That pulses with the blood that warms his own,
So, yearning always for my English North,
I linger, listening lovingly, by Forth.

FROM STRATFORD TO LONDON.

EVER since Washington Irving set the example, the travellers—or, as they generally prefer to style themselves, the pilgrims into Shakespeare land, have in goodly numbers given to the world a record of their sensations and ideas. They tell us what they feel, as they stand in the upper room, or in the lower room, or in the coal-cellar of the house in Henley Street; or as they try, not always successfully, to construe the dog-Latin on the monument in the church; or as they view the thatched roof of Anne Hathaway's cottage, the last-named being a lion never left undone by Americans. Sometimes, and with abundant reason, they will venture to hint that the "song of sixpence" is a little too much sung in Stratford. Sixpence here, sixpence there, is the cry. By the way, do Scotchmen ever visit Stratford? I met one pilgrim just turning his back on the shrine, deeply vexed in spirit on this account; but the influence of the Bard had apparently swayed his soul powerfully, for as we sat over our supper of eggs and bacon, he dropped into poetry as follows:

Sing a Song of Sixpence. Sixpence is the charge.
For what we've got to offer, sure the sum is not too large.
Sixpence for the Birthplace, and then, if you are willing,
The same for the Museum, just to make the even shilling;
Sixpence for the Theatre, or you'll be in the lurch,
And sixpence—what's the matter?—is the fee to view the Church.
And sixpence—nay, good sir, I prithee, do not curse and swear,
Take it for all in all, you'll ne'er look on the like elsewhere.

I am not a great traveller; but I don't think you ever will.

My own visit to Stratford on this occasion was undertaken for purely geographical reasons. I thought no more of the birthplace of Shakespeare than of the birthplace of Podgers. I went to Stratford, simply because it was the most convenient point to take to the water on the river Avon, and work my way back to London on the smooth keel of a rowing-boat, instead of by the grinding and rattling railway. Before I started, I received many warnings from sympathetic friends, as to the perils and difficulties of the voyage, especially in the part which lay between Stratford and Evesham. None of the locks could be opened, and the boat would have to be lifted at every one. At a certain point, indeed, we were informed that we would be obliged to carry our boat for half-a-mile across a meadow. Then the millers were hostile to boating adventurers, some of them keeping fierce dogs for the harassing of the same, and all of them throwing obstacles—concrete ones sometimes—in their way. Then there were shoals and sandbanks innumerable, and if we escaped the violence of millers, we should probably find a watery grave on account of these.

Our crew consisted of myself—promoted to the arduous and responsible office of captain, apparently because I was expected to obey implicitly all the commands of the crew; a young lady, whom we christened *Palinura* after the worthy of the *Æneid*, because of her intense love of steering, when compared with rowing; and a public school boy, with feet and legs which had a marvellous trick of being all over the boat, who was known as "The Infant." Him we appointed caterer; and I am bound to say that he kept the luncheon-basket well supplied throughout the voyage.

We launched our boat below the ruined lock at Stratford, so we had nothing to do with the passage of the first obstruction; and, bad as its present plight is, it is no worse than that of all the other locks and weirs, eight in number, down to Evesham. So one at least of the woeful forebodings of our friends was correct; but after all, the unshipping of the luggage, the hauling out and relaunching of our light double sculling gig, and the reloading and embarkation, were not great trouble to us who had devoted a long summer day to the seventeen miles between Evesham and Stratford. The portage of half-a-mile, I am glad to say, we found to be an imaginary terror, as was also the alleged ferocity of

the Midland miller and his belongings. May I never meet more churlish foes than these; nay, I will go further, and indulge in a wish that I may always meet friends as ready and courteous as several of them proved to be at certain junctures, when a little help and information with regard to weirs and sandbanks were most welcome. As a rule, the miller's boy would be on the look-out from a lofty window, and would hurry down to lend us a hand, and on one occasion, the miller's daughter, a most charming young lady, left her angling, and directed us into the right channel.

A poet or a painter, wishing to sing or paint the placid beauty of rural England, might look in vain for a better type than that which abounds in this upper reach of the Avon. The full, even-flowing stream, bounded now by sloping woods and now by level stretches of rich pasture; the sleek and shapely cattle that saunter slowly up to the bank to have a look at the unwonted sight of a boat, when they are not enjoying too much the process of digestion to rise from their grassy couch; the soft green magnificence of the elm-tree foliage, the cool grey gleam of the willow branches as the wind lifts them, and the stately sentinel-like forms of the Lombardy poplars, rising above the copses and hedgerows; the glorious wealth of wild-flower bloom, loose-strife, willow herb, forget-me-not, fringing the stream with a border of dazzling colour, which shines up scarcely less brilliant from the reflecting surface of the water; these would be the leading points to be grasped and reproduced. Then, defying all the powers of the artist, there is a charm in the stillness and well-nigh perfect solitude; save when passing the riparian villages, one meets with scarcely an indication of the existence of man. The eye may now and then behold him in the shape of an angler, deeply engaged in watching the movements of four or more floats—your Avon fishermen rarely fishes with less than four rods—and the ear may now and then recognise his presence in the shriek of the distant locomotive or the ringing of the village-school bell.

In solitude there is always a sense of sadness, but with me the deepest note of pathos is struck when I feel that the solitude has been made. The solitude of the Australian bush, or of mid ocean, is a necessary attribute of Nature's unreclaimed or irreclaimable kingdom; but in clambering over these ruined, grey-stone locks, I

was reminded that the now deserted river was once a busy highway of trade. Venice, perhaps, is more picturesque now than it was in the height of its commercial prosperity; but there still remains the sense of sadness which springs from failure and desertion; and this I could not help feeling on the Avon, though the larks were singing in full chorus, and the air was filled with the scent of the bean-fields, and the bank and meadows were radiant with all the hues of June.

A few miles above Evesham, is a noted hostelry, the "Fish and Anchor;" and just below this, as we were being borne gallantly by a rapid stream down a wide reach, we were suddenly made aware of the presence of one of the terrible shoals against which we had been warned. There was a groaning under the keel as the boat swung round, and she heeled over so much that a ducking seemed likely. My companions, light in mind and body, suggested that I, more solid in either sense, should step overboard into the shallow stream and let them float off, promising to return and reclaim me when I should have waded up to my middle; but this method failed to win my approval. Ultimately, by concentrating all the weight in the stern and the bow alternately, we allowed the boat to wriggle into deep water, and sculled gaily away.

To see the town of Evesham aright, one should approach it as we did. Once I passed through it before by railway, and all the memory I bore away was of the square top of a bell-tower, and a station yard filled with cabbages; but how different it looked when seen from the river! The picturesque houses slope down to the water's edge, the bell-tower stands up majestically on the brow of a green hill—the architect surely must have recently looked at Merton College tower when he designed it—and one of the handsomest modern bridges in England spans the stream. The town is full of fine old houses. At the top of the High Street on the left stands a quaint block of ancient dwellings seemingly untouched; and between these, running under a fragment of the Abbey buildings, is the way into the churchyard, with its two churches—where the good people of Evesham may take turn and turn about in doing their devotions—and the noble bell-tower, or "clocker," from which their births, and marriages, and deaths, are duly rung out.

But we must give topography a wide berth, or we shall never get on to London.

Those who wish to know anything of Evesham and its surroundings cannot do better than turn back to the "Chronicles of the English Counties," and see what the author of those papers had to say when he wrote of Worcestershire. I certainly shall ever be grateful to him for the items of local history anent the famous battle of Evesham; for Palinura, who was consumed with a romantic attachment for Simon de Montford, insisted on tramping off to see the battle-field.

Just outside the town some magnificent turnips were growing, and these, I explained, drew their nourishment from the blood and bones of the Norman barons, who, as some simple-minded historians teach, died fighting for the liberties of the Saxon churls; but still she was not satisfied, and wanted to see the spot where Simon had stood when he said: "The Lord have mercy upon our souls, for our bodies belong to the enemy," and the place where he finally fell. By the help of the fragments of the Chronicles that still clung to my memory—imagination filling up the gaps—I was able to speak in an authoritative manner, and to satisfy the youthful thirst for knowledge. So ultimately we embarked, and set sail for Tewkesbury.

But we were not fated to see Tewkesbury that day. It would have been a good day's work for a crew who "put their backs into it," and this practice was one which did not find favour with us. Our progress was leisurely at the best, and we should have been foolish indeed to hurry through such a lovely country. People who want to "put their backs into it" should go boating about Peterborough, or on the Eau-brink Cut. Though the locks are in going order on this part of the river, it is a matter of time to get through them, and, as nobody ever seems to come up the river, they almost always have to be filled before one can get in.

We were now in the heart of the fruit country, and a wolfish gleam would shine from the Infant's eyes as we floated under orchards full of plum-trees literally breaking down under the weight of fruit, and now and then he suggested that he should jump ashore to see if he couldn't "buy" some for dessert; but I, remembering the favourite practice of youth for the acquisition of fruit, when no one was looking, put a stern veto on this. Our progress, as I have before remarked, was slow, but we couldn't wait for the next Justices' sitting.

Then, again, the Infant's determination to have lunch in what he called "decent fashion," and Palinura's love of ease always necessitated a halt of an hour about one o'clock; this afternoon, five o'clock tea consumed half-an-hour more; so we soon gave up all idea of reaching Tewkesbury, and seeing the village of Eckington marked on the map, determined to stop there; but to our surprise and consternation, found that Eckington consisted of a bridge—a very fine old bridge indeed—and nothing else. At least, that was all we could see from the river—there was no house, nowhere to leave the boat, and darkness was coming on fast. Eckington must be somewhere; but it was hard to determine where, as one angler told us it was three-quarters of a mile away, and another three miles. So we resolved to push on to the ferry at Twinning's Fleet, where at least we could find shelter and leave our boat.

The last of the locks was half-a-mile lower down, and beside it there stands a gaunt, ruined mill—ruined, that is, as far as its glass windows are concerned. The failing light, the dark woods at the back, and the tangled growth of weeds about the place, which was ten years old at the utmost, made a picture of the blankest desolation. There was a cold wind blowing up stream, the rain was just beginning to fall, and the prospect of a six miles' row was not inviting. Some one suggested that we should camp in the deserted mill, and this probably we should have done, had the wind been less biting and the windows better glazed. Uncanny as the place looked, it was much too new to possess a ghost, unless, indeed, the man who built it may have drowned himself in the pool; or the miller who worked it may have hanged himself upon the crane, having no corn to hoist. Now we did "put our backs into it;" but there was no scenery to look at, and the blood had to be kept in circulation. However, at the first turn of the river another mill came in sight—a real, old-fashioned, red-roofed, grey-stone mill, in full going order; and here we found a miller who was more than friendly. He would take care of our boat and carry our bags over to Eckington, which, it seemed, was only half-a-mile distant from this point, and have everything ready for us for an early start in the morning.

Eckington is a famous fishing station. The first inn we called at was full of jolly anglers. We went farther on, but I cannot think we fared worse in the hands of the

genial host just over the way. We were a draggled, disreputable-looking crew; but he gave us of his best, and with a hearty, kindly manner, not charged in the bill, and not "on draught" in certain hostelries I know of; so that we went our way next morning reflecting that in some respects a village inn may be a very efficient substitute for a grand hotel.

From Eckington to Tewkesbury the Avon flows through a flat and less picturesque country than higher up. Bredon Hill, which we first saw before we reached Evesham, shows its huge ridge, now on the right and now on the left hand. As the massive square tower of the Abbey came in sight, I remembered with regret that there was once a great battle fought at Tewkesbury, and that Palinura would for certain want to stand on the very spot where "false, fleeting, perjured Clarence" did young Edward to death. I had a firm conviction that the battle was fought close to the town, between the two rivers. I explained this to the student of history, and remarked how fortunate it was that we were able to "do" the battle-field from the boat. For once she agreed with me; but perhaps the rain, which was coming down in sheets, may have made her the more inclined to accept my dictum. We landed dripping, and went to dry ourselves and get some food at the "Swan." We were sad at leaving the lovely Avon in such unpropitious weather; but the Infant's heart was heavy chiefly because there would be no picnic lunch to-day.

Tewkesbury is a charming town. It is a busy, prosperous place, but the current of modern life has not been so rapid and feverish as to bear down the landmarks of the past. Right opposite our hotel stood "Clarence House," where Clarence might very well have stayed—I do not affirm that he did—the night before or after the battle. The Abbey is one of the glories of English architecture, and has been written about by Professor Freeman; so let the unlearned beware how they call round arches Anglo-Saxon. Its grandeur must strike the dullest perception. It is the thing everybody sees in Tewkesbury; but there was one other feature in the town which I marked particularly—one I have never seen noticed. This is, that many of the houses in the middle of the town seem to have beautiful gardens behind them. You look up a narrow passage under an archway, and beyond the gloom, the eye lights upon a patch of sunlit green, flecked with brilliant

colours, and festooned with Virginia creeper and vine.

Tewkesbury Lock opened to us, and we were on the waters of the broad Severn. Broad rivers, however, are out of sympathy with our peculiar form of boating; and this reach, and the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal up to Stroud were the least attractive parts of the trip; but, on leaving Stroud, the Golden Valley—which well deserves its name—opened before us. This lovely nook in the Cotswolds is, indeed, a gem. The bold rolling hills on either side are dotted and crowned with beautiful woods, dense and luxuriant in growth and brilliant in tint.

A Swiss valley can show—enclosing mountains nearly twenty times as high as the homely Cotswolds—perpendicular, bare rock by the square mile; but to me, bare rock is never beautiful, whether it stands on end or lies flat. It has snow enough for ten of our winters; but, to my taste, a field of barley lighted up with poppies and corn-flowers is a fairer jewel on a hill-side than a snow-field or a dirty glacier; and, if anyone finds the stunted, distorted, angular fir trees in the Rhone Valley more to his taste than our English elms and oaks—why, let him go there and stop there.

Along this valley the Thames and Severn Canal makes its way, going up stairs, as it were, through twenty-eight locks, till it reaches the summit level at Sapperton. The locks often come four or five together, so progress is naturally slow.

The passage of Sapperton Tunnel—some two miles in length—is the grand episode of the voyage. There is no towing path, and sculling by the light of a single candle is not very efficient; so we pushed and punted ourselves along with boat-hooks. The echo from the stroke of the steel upon the brickwork rolled along the vaulted roof, and our one candle's flame was reflected a hundred-fold on the ripples made by the passage of our boat. It was a new experience, decidedly Stygian in its character; and the Infant came out strong in quotations from the Sixth *Æneid*. He had lunched before entering the tunnel, so was in excellent spirits.

The country on the other side of the Cotswold is tamer in its features. At Thames Head one sees the chimney of the pumping station, which is supposed to take tithe of the infant Thames for the benefit of the canal; but it gave out no smoke, and this explained the fact that there were

but two feet of water, and barely that, along the summit level. A little farther on we met a gentleman who was interested in the canal, and we learned from him how it was that the pumping-engines were standing idle.

Not long ago the Great Western Railway bought a sufficient amount of Canal shares to acquire what is called a controlling position on the Board, and the earliest use they made of their control was to leave off pumping, and so close the canal for barge traffic. I have since learnt that, had we been ten days later, even our light boat would not have floated. Seeing that the Railway Company have so large a stake in the canal, it would appear strange that they should thus set to work to ruin their own property; but listen. It is only partially their property after all; and the railway which follows the same line of country belongs to them entirely, so it is only natural that they should abjure the half loaf in favour of the whole. A man will get rich in flinging sixpences into the sea, if a shilling falls into his hand for everyone he throws. Of course, things are not working so satisfactorily with the other shareholders in the canal. Their half loaf is gone, or is rapidly going, and there is no quatern in the cupboard for them. It is no profit to them that the canal traffic is all shifted to the railway. There is indeed a special Act of Parliament to protect their interests, and to bind the Great Western Railway to maintain the canal; but then Railway Companies do not care much for Acts of Parliament. They are not the terror to an august Corporation that they are to a single individual. To break an Act by omission is a very easy matter, and a very safe one where a railway company is the offender. A public-spirited man must be found to call upon the High Court of Justice to intervene; and when he has made his challenge he will find himself confronted by an array of barristers, and solicitors, and engineers, whom the railway company keeps to fight its battles. Railway companies, it is well known, will fight to the last ditch, consequently, men with public spirit enough to beard them are rare. It is to be hoped, however, that in this matter, one will arise, before one of the finest engineering works of this century falls utterly to ruin.

Men of business must demand of their representatives, on economic grounds, how it is that they have thus suffered the monopolists to further strengthen their

position. I merely plead on behalf of the ever-increasing body of townsmen who prefer to take their summer holiday in a boat, beneath an English sky, amongst English meadows. Of course there is the Thames, but the Thames in these days of house-boats and steam launches seems, as far as its favourite reaches are concerned, to be destined to endure the humours of a perpetual Bank holiday. A waterway like the Thames and Severn Canal, is indeed a rare find to men who prefer nature undefiled by nigger minstrels, and steam whistles, and the cockney ostentation of barge shanties. To such as these the crowded river becomes every year less delightful, and they will push on beyond Lechlade into the deserted canal—just as the cyclists have peopled once more the deserted turnpike roads—if the canal be really a canal, and not a dry ditch.

But while I have been anathematising the Great Western Railway, we have floated past Cirencester, where, by-the-bye, we stopped the night, and are at Siddington locks—five of them all close together. No more going up, up, up. The descent had begun, and by the time we passed the last lock we had sunk fifty feet and more. There was plenty of water now, and plenty of fish too. An Avon fisherman with his four or five rods would soon fill his basket here, I should fancy, but not a single angler did we see all the way.

We passed the town of Cricklade, with its pinnacled church-tower rising from amongst the elms about half-a-mile to our right. We were now unmistakably in the Thames valley, and now and then could catch a glimpse of the river itself. Down to Inglesham Round House the country is quite pretty enough to make it worth while for a pedestrian to include the towing-path in a walking tour. But the latter part of it we saw imperfectly, as it was almost dark by the time we passed through Inglesham Lock, and found ourselves at last in the Thames.

Lechlade is a quaint old place; and one relic of mediævalism is specially to be noted. The streets are as dark at night as they were in the reign of King John. For Lechlade gas has been discovered, Mr. Edison has laboured, and other Americans have struck oil, in vain. If the kindly coal-merchant who took care of our boat, had not lighted our steps to the inn with a lantern, we might have fallen a dozen times. If Conrad Ney, the good vicar who rebuilt the church in King Hal's

time, were to rise from his tomb, he would be only moderately surprised at the altered state of things. He would find no railway to perplex him; for though Lechlade figures in Bradshaw, the station is a mile or more from the town.

The ancient stone bridges which span the river in its upper reaches, are some of the most picturesque relics of old England that are left. Lechlade Bridge and St. John's Bridge have been in a measure spoilt by the rebuilding of the centre arch; but Radcot and New Bridge are untouched, and with their narrow pointed arches and angular buttresses, built in the warm grey-tinted stone of the district, seem just what a Thames bridge should be. So indeed the builders of the bridge at Clifton Hampden must have thought, for that is almost an exact reproduction in brick of Radcot Bridge.

The river scenery down to Oxford is tame, perhaps, but it can hardly be called uninteresting. The wooded ridge of Faringdon follows one almost as persistently as do Wittenham Clumps lower down, for the benefit of those who are not satisfied with the level green pastures, and the elms and willows, and the happy-looking cattle with nothing to do but eat and drink, and lie in the shade; but I confess that a landscape such as I have described is quite good enough for me, especially on a roasting day.

I would warn the traveller who has never seen Oxford before, against approaching it by the way of the upper river. Surely beautiful city never had such squalid surroundings. Gas-works, coal-wharves, railway-yards, are now our portion in place of fresh green meadows, and it is almost like entering another world when one shoots under Folly Bridge into the full glory of the Christ Church elms, with the river gay with the College barges, and glittering in the sun, and the grey tower of Iffley Church amidst the distant woods.

We spent six days more in delicious loitering down to Hampton Court; but nowadays, a description of this part of our voyage would be as superfluous as a description of the highway between Charing Cross and the Bank of England. So I must have done, gratified at having recalled, in the process of setting them down on paper, the memories of many pleasant scenes, which anyone who reads may search for with profit next summer.

THE OLD "R.A."

A STORY IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

SEBASTIAN found it necessary to have very numerous sittings, and it so happened that his mother—who had come unexpectedly to town to consult a great physician for her husband, who was out of health—surprised a very pretty tableau. The fair-haired, milky-complexioned model sat on the dais, with drooping head and very pink cheeks, her long, white, angelic drapery trailing round her, and kneeling by her, with both her hands clasped in his and rapturously held to his breast, was Mrs. Fellowes's immaculate Sebastian!

A dreadful vision of virtue overthrown, of the temptations of Babylon, and fair-haired, deceitful Delilahs, passed through the mother's brain, and made her utter a kind of scream; but Sebastian was not at all perturbed, though his poor angel felt ready to sink through the floor in innocent shame. He jumped up cheerfully and embraced his mother, with a surprised enquiry as to how she got there. She told him in a few incoherent sentences how his father was ill, and had come up to see the great physician, and how she had left him to rest after his journey, thinking to surprise her dear Sebastian; but now, really, who is this—this young person?

"This young lady, mother," Sebastian answered with some emphasis, "is going to be my wife. Come here, Mary. I hope you and my dear good mother will love each other."

It was very difficult and awkward for poor Mary to move in her flowing garments, and she felt altogether shy and miserable; but Mrs. Fellowes was far too soft and sentimental a soul not to melt at the situation, and a very few words more made her weep over the girl whom she folded in a large embrace and kissed, with the long, spaniel-like curls tickling her face so that it was all Mary could do to stand it.

"And, mother, I have more good news for you," Sebastian said presently, when the situation had become less acute. "In spite of the set some of the Academicians have made against me, they have made an 'A.R.A.' of me."

"A.R.A." at thirty, Sebastian Fellowes at forty was a fully enrolled member of the noble army of Royal Academicians, privileged to exhibit eight pictures on the

line; a privilege of which he availed himself every year for more than twenty years, with scarcely a gap. He was the "luckiest beggar," his friends said.

He took a large house in Kensington, and built a studio. He was very generous and kind to young artists who were tractable, to all his relations and old friends. He narrowed, of course, and hardened round a certain set of opinions. He was sure to do that. He got intolerant and more intolerant of differing beliefs, of all Bohemianism, irreligion, disrespectability of any kind—of theatres, of smoking, and of many other things which most men call harmless and necessary.

His early strict training, the narrow groove of the old Birmingham household had first shaped his mind, and it was one to grow only in a certain shape. No one said any ill of him; he was a good deal ridiculed, it is true, but that did not touch him, and in his home he was adored.

When his father died suddenly, some years after Sebastian's marriage, he took his mother to live with him, and, astonishing to say, mother and wife agreed. Mary was gentle, malleable, grateful, devoted. The two had one common object of adoration; they united in declaring Sebastian to be the first, best, dearest, most gifted of men; in admiring every dab of his brush, every line made by his pencil.

They had an album filled with newspaper scraps—of course, all eulogistic notices of his pictures. The nasty critiques, the sneering or ridiculing ones, found their way silently to the waste-paper basket, and lit the fire.

Mary thanked Heaven every night that she had found such a husband; his mother that she had so good a son. As for him, he was very happy. Mary was the best of wives, and he was so content with his lot that he hardly grieved over what was her one secret sorrow—that they had no children.

He would have liked a son to inherit his genius; she yearned for a daughter to be as blessed as she was. For the rest they had no troubles, or only very few. Sometimes he felt as if he were rather unappreciated, that with all his efforts art was not purified; that the public taste was growing coarse and depraved. They passed his large Biblical or allegorical pictures by, and flocked to some realistic, horrible, or sensual picture—these were his epithets for them. Perhaps the world would not have echoed them.

The papers had a nasty trick of sneering at his "smooth sentimentalism," his "impossible anatomy," and so on. He only thought the world growing bad, but it distressed him a little to see the people led astray, and pure art despised. Mary felt it too, but she managed to soothe him at home with her boundless sympathy, and the innocent flattery of her belief in him. He had been prudent; had made good investments; and, with his father's legacy, was rich enough, if not exceedingly so. When he had passed his forty-fifth birthday, his mother died as gently as she deserved to do, mildly giving up a life which had been a tranquil one; which had been lived, perhaps, not in the highest air, but had been very sweet and wholesome in its narrow, guarded sphere. Sebastian felt her loss as good sons ought; but he had a great consolation, which he repeated constantly to himself—he had done his duty throughout; he had made her happy. In this, as in other respects, he had nothing to reproach himself with.

He did not exhibit his full number of pictures at the next Academy Exhibition; but a rumour put about that he was giving up, that he had painted himself out, roused him to great energy, and a determination to disabuse the public mind of so absurd an idea; and the year following, he worked so industriously at covering his large canvases that his wife trembled for his health. She dreaded his falling a martyr to the demands of his art; but Sebastian's was not an exhausting Muse; he had none of the irritability, the restlessness, the fits of indolence and despondency that genius knows. That genius of his, in which he himself and Mary—and no one else in the world—so devoutly believed, was only a talent dressed up, only the fatal facility of his youth, which his old master—long since dead in a garret—had decried in his student days. And talent is not exhausting; it has none of the maddening demands, the fierce contradictions of genius; it goes hand-in-hand very well with industry and wealth.

"What a truly awful picture! Whose is it—and what is it supposed to represent?"

One young art student put this question to another in the Academy of only a few years since, as they paused in front of a vast and highly-coloured canvas.

"Don't you know? Whose else could it be?" answered the other, laughing.

"The inimitable Fellowes, R.A., of course; though he has rather surpassed himself this year. 'An Allegory of Life and Death,' he calls it. Blest if I can make out anything but a lot of disjointed, sprawling creatures in flopping drapery. You need never ask who has painted any particularly awful picture—safe to find it's an R.A., and generally Fellowes."

An elder man joined them at the moment—a rather rough-looking, grey-bearded man with bright eyes; an artist working his way up doggedly, by means of the sort of pictures which Sebastian Fellowes had always denounced.

"Don't talk so loud, you fellows!" he said, tapping one of them on the shoulder. "I saw the painter of this lovely acre of canvas close by just now. He generally haunts the neighbourhood of his works of art; and your remarks might be painful."

"But surely a picture exhibited publicly on the line is public property; and I shouldn't have thought, Mr. Murray, that you would be so very tender over old Fellowes. Aren't you and he at daggers drawn?"

"Ay! But somehow I've a sort of compassion for him; this exhibition is rather pathetic to me. He has got so hopelessly past his age, and he goes on believing in himself and thinking that others do so too; besides, he's really a good sort of worthy soul, and he looks haggard and altered. He's lost all his complacent dignity. Some one says that his wife died after a long illness, while he was painting that poor old daub—that figure's taken from her, they say."

The three moved on talking. They did not notice a tall man, who leant on the rail near the big picture, with his head down. A good many people might have failed to recognise Sebastian Fellowes, once so sleek, prosperous, stately; he had grown thin, grey, haggard-looking, all at once. A year and a half ago, the discovery that his wife—his other self, his Mary, who adored him and who was to him the pearl of all womankind, in spite of her fifty years and faded prettiness, in spite of her grey hairs and the altered lines of her once plump and comely figure—that she was marked out for death; that a few short years at most, perhaps months, of growing torture would end the happy communion between them, unspoilt, undisturbed for almost thirty years, which seemed but a day for the love they bore each other; this knowledge, the cruel tragedy of

swiftly overtaking Fate, crushed all the happiness out of the husband's life, and brought suddenly upon him the certainty of a hopeless woe. He kept it to himself, as a man must when the woman is to be spared; he was cheerful, hopeful to her, studiously commonplace for a long time, as if he did not see or know of any change; but this broke down—he found that it distressed her; that she would be relieved if they could share the burden, and they talked together of the days that were to come, and tried to comfort each other with the religion which they had worn all their lives without particularly feeling the need of it, perhaps, but which they now wanted to make a sufficient shelter against despair.

Ah, we talk and talk, we preach and pray, but when the heart is cold and sick, and we stand shivering at the edge of a dark precipice, over which we soon must go, how difficult it is to comfort our souls with any of the phrases which we called beliefs, and the consolations which availed for little sorrows! These were good, orthodox, believing souls; but there was a voice not to be silenced, that kept crying on in the wakeful, weeping heart of each. The wife was the first consoled; patience came with the rapidly approaching end; the husband, who took the part of the one who sustains and comforts, was most in need of support. He found a melancholy relief at times in painting; he would sanctify his grief, he said, and make out of it a help and message to the world, to other people who had to suffer as he did. He sat for hours while his wife slept after her opiates, and put many a really noble and beautiful thought, which haunted him in a dreamy way, into visible shape—at least he thought he put them. His allegory of Life and Death meant a great deal to him, and he felt as if it must speak plainly to the world.

After this he thought he would paint no more. He was conscious of a curious failing: a numbness of brain; a forgetfulness at times. He told himself that his day was done; that he would retire on this one great achievement, this message of his sorrow and love, and then give himself up to loneliness, to prayer—trying to knit his soul with that other soul that would soon be beyond his voice. He thought at times with a certain longing of the Roman Catholic Church; of retreats; of the still, dim churches where he had wandered in his travelling days; of lying at the foot of a crucifix in the silence, and calling upon

the Christ who had suffered; perhaps, though his Protestant conscience recoiled, he thought of the Mary whose name was so dear and sacred to him. He felt almost happy in moments when thus seated at this great picture of his, which was to be his masterpiece, when his mind soared into spiritual visions, and life seemed a mere short dream to be soon got through.

Before the picture was finished, his wife died. He crawled back the day after the funeral to his studio, and painted again. He seemed less lonely there than anywhere else, and he painted on, half-unconscious. It seemed to him all right and beautiful; he fancied that an angel guided his hand. No one saw the picture in the studio; people called and left kind messages, but he saw no one. He scarcely ate or slept, but grew every day grayer, more wasted, more altered; but he was not so utterly miserable till the picture—his only one—was sent to the Academy. Then his work in life seemed done; he could not paint any more, he could only sit before his easel looking with blank, unseeing eyes on a blank canvas, and waiting till his picture should speak for him to the world. This was all that he had to look forward to—only a chill phantom of a hope but still feebly glimmering upon the dark of his long, lone, dreary, companionless days. He sat in the studio motionless before the empty canvas on the easel, thinking of the early married years, when Mary sat and worked there, stopping her stitching and hemming to watch and admire; when they still hoped for the children to make their blithe noise in the large, quiet rooms, when youth, and hope, and enjoyment were their portion. He got up sometimes, moved by he knew not what vague impulse, and wandered into the room where, during those sad last months, which now seemed almost bliss by comparison, she had lain so white and patient on that couch which was now smoothed down, and empty like everything else.

He talked to himself, or to her, found himself asking questions and waiting for an answer when only silence mocked his ear; he was terrified as if by a crime, and thought himself growing an infidel, because it seemed to him that, when he called on Heaven, there was silence too, and only untenanted space all round him.

Poor Sebastian! Doubt had always been one of the sins of the world in his eyes, and even in this anguish of bereavement, and his sense of forsakenness, his

spirit was struggling against it with what force remained to him. The servants, who liked him—for he was a kind master, though a distant one—shook their heads over his looks and ways; he was not himself, they said, meaning much by the phrase, which, indeed, was most true. He was not himself; he had been torn asunder from the main support of his life, and the clutch of Giant Despair was on his heart.

A faint gleam of something like interest in the world revisited him on the day on which the Academy opened. He tried not to dwell upon the remembrance of all the other opening days when his proud, adoring wife had been with him, and all the exhibition centred to her in her particular R.A.'s seven or eight big pictures; when she gleaned all the complimentary remarks (alas! scanty enough lately) made by country folks, and women chiefly, which she could repeat to him, and refused to hear the scoffs and rude laughter that sometimes passed by her hero's work.

This great picture of his, his Allegory of Life and Death, painted, it seemed to him, with his very heart's blood, which meant to him all that was most sacred, tenderest, noblest in his mind, this must touch even a careless and depraved public, and speak from him to them as deep calls to deep. He took up his place near it, not from vanity now—he had had his days of vanity and self-conceit, he had been blinded by an ingenuous, not unloveable, sort of egotism ever since the old days of his studentship, when Hamlin abused him for his "fatal facility" and "want of devil"—but he was moved now by a different spirit; it was more the longing for human sympathy, by a desire to force the thoughtless world into an affinity with what seemed to the man broken with grief, the only mood worth attaining in this life of ours, with its momentary possibilities of disaster and misery. He listened, with all his soul on the stretch, with every nerve quivering for this touch, with an acuteness of hearing unusual to him, for the words of the passers-by.

He heard one after another, as they paused to give a curious, amused, cursory glance at this work of his supremest moments, throw it a light, ridiculing, frivolous remark. He heard men say, "Old Fellowes again! Why, he must be in his second childhood. Isn't it preposterous to cover the walls with this sort of stuff?" He heard the laughing voice of girls and boys: "Oh, goodness, what a picture!

What does it all mean? What's this great sprawling creature with the green face doing? What are all these miscellaneous things messing about here for? Chains, and money, and flowers—like an old curiosity shop! Isn't it too amusing?"

Every light, jesting word stung him like a whip of nettles. Amusing! Absurd! His great picture, his conception of the deepest, most tragical realities of life and sorrow! He started suddenly from his leaning position, and faced wildly about on the assembled crowd which was moving, laughing, buzzing before him, till his disordered, confused brain spun round as in a witches' dance. He looked from side to side, and out of the confusion one fact glared clearly at him. Everyone was given up to evil tastes and pursuits. This jeering, foolish mob were led astray by the false gods of the world. They were pushing each other, straining to see, eager to admire that picture there—which to him at this moment seemed inspired by Satan himself—that picture of Cleopatra and her women, the guileful "Serpent of Old Nile," with her shameless, flaunting charms; this, this was the modern idol, the taste of the art world of to-day! He threw out his arms wildly, and put some of the scorching anger that burnt in his brain into loud, strange words. He denounced the Cleopatra, the vile taste of the world, the sin and the shame, which were real enough to him in spite of his half delirium; the half frightened, shrinking, half amused looks and whispers of the people, who fell away out of the reach of his swinging arms, and stared at his haggard face and burning eyes, only spurred him on to louder, fiercer denunciations, and more unsparing epithets of blame. Two men who had seen him from a distance, made their way hastily towards him: one was the painter Murray; the other another artist, an old friend who owed much to Sebastian's kindness.

"The poor old man is beside himself," he said hastily; "he has been like that since his wife died. Let's stop it, and get him away if possible."

"If possible, before he does a mischief; make haste. He is quite mad, to judge from his looks."

The first speaker reached him, and took his arm with a firm but kindly grasp speaking soothingly in his ear.

"My dear Mr. Fellowes—it is hardly the place, is it? You won't want to make a scene here—you'll come away with me. My wife will be so glad to see you."

Sebastian ceased talking suddenly, and turned round on the speaker with a dazed and vacant stare.

"Eh?" he said, with not a touch of his old punctilious courtesy. "I don't know you or your wife—my wife is dead," he added, with a sudden pitiful drop in his voice; "she was a good woman. I should have liked you to know her. She is dead, and the people in London are all gone mad. They rave about that—that piece of meretricious audacity," he raised his tone again as he pointed with his long waving arm at the Cleopatra, "and sneer at my Allegory of Life and Death, which was meant to regenerate the world!"

"Yes, yes," cried the other, eager to get him away with as little fuss as possible, "it is shameful, astonishing; but I wouldn't stop here now, Mr. Fellowes. It will only tire you, and there is too much noise for people to hear what you say—suppose you write a paper and explain your picture—it's too subtle, too deep—come away—let's talk of it."

He drew him gently through the gaping crowd—the strange-looking, wild, altered grey-beard, who was once the serene, prosperous, handsome, stately Sebastian Fellowes, unrecognisable almost now, and a thing to stir pathos and pity.

In a few days there was this announcement in the "Times":

"On the sixth inst., very suddenly, Sebastian Fellowes, R.A., of — Square, Kensington."

Neil Murray, happening to light on Mr. Fellowes's friend Kelly, asked him some particulars of the death.

The good-natured little man looked grave.

"It was a tragedy—an odd ending of a commonplace, prosperous life. The poor old boy was quite mad; his brain seemed suddenly and utterly to have given way. I suppose the loss of his wife and not taking care of his health had begun it, and the reception of that unfortunate, inconceivable picture finished him. He never could bear that sort of thing well; but while he was all right he simply ignored criticism or ridicule, and put it down to jealousy or want of perception. He had the firmest, finest belief in himself. In the state he was in—worked up already to a queer pitch of excitement—it was too rough on him. The making a joke of what was so solemn a reality to him was the worst. He was quite, entirely beside

himself when I got him out of the Academy. I took him to his house; warned the servants, who seemed to have expected some such break-out, and sent for his old friend Dr. Harley. I called in the evening, and the servants said he had got very quiet, and had gone to lie down in their mistress's room. I waited a long while, and getting somehow a little uneasy, I went up at last, and as no one answered when I knocked, I went in. He was kneeling upon the floor, with his body thrown over a little couch. On the table was a manuscript, methodically pinned together—the most utter farrago of rubbish you can imagine—a treatise on art, of which he was the only living worthy representative; denunciation of painting of the nude; an exposition of his views on religion, all jumbled up together and dedicated to his faithful and adored wife. He was quite dead."

"Dead! But what killed him?"

"Of all men in the world the most unlikely, I should say, to do it—he had committed suicide. He had taken the morphia which was left in the bottle that was used for Mrs. Fellowes. Of course there was not a shadow of doubt as to his absolute insanity. After all, it is the very best thing that could have happened to him. His day was over in every sense. Oh, by the way, he has left all his unsold pictures to his native town. Don't you think they will make a wry face there over his bequest?"

"He has gone to find out the eternal 'if'!" said Murray thoughtfully—"a man who had no 'if' in his life. It is a curious end to a commonplace career. So the 'Allegory of Life and Death' wants an interpreter still!"

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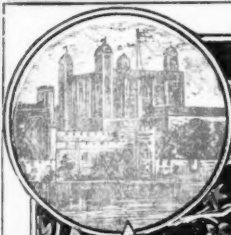


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